



## How is an Inclusive Agenda in an Excluding Education System: The Danish Dilemma

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**How is an Inclusive Agenda possible in an Excluding Education System? Revisiting the Danish Dilemma**

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The policy of inclusion in the Scandinavian countries is often related to the idea of the welfare state, and specifically to notions of equality, equity and democracy. The image of the welfare state seems to live well, even though structural and social barriers seem to maintain inequality

when it comes to access to education. Instead of overcoming the barriers, the politics of inclusion may actually make the gap between ideals and realities more visible. In this article, we analyse the political efforts to create a more inclusive education system in Denmark in relation to these structural barriers. By applying the notions of discourse and dispositive of Foucault, we argue that the policies of educational inclusion encompass rationales and governing techniques directed at the societal and individual levels that may in itself challenge the inclusive agenda. By highlighting some of the political notions of inclusion, we highlight the discrepancies between inclusion as a political project and the structural barriers on the one hand, and inclusion as educational practice on the other. This challenges the previously accepted image of how well the Scandinavian welfare state is doing, especially as it relates to solving the gap between privilege and disadvantage in education.

**Keywords:** *Inclusive education; Inclusion; Danish education; dispositive; optimization*

## Introduction

Inclusion, as a general concept, has been articulated as “... meaning everything and nothing at the same time” (Armstrong, Armstrong, and Spandagou 2011, 31). Internationally, there has been great progress in the inclusive education movement (Fasting 2013; Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2017). Many countries have developed policies that are committed to building more inclusive education systems, positioning education as a potential site for promoting social cohesion (Armstrong et al. 2011). However, there has been great discrepancy between inclusion as a political ideal and inclusion as a practice (Armstrong et al. 2011; Dyson 2001; Haug, 2016 Qvortrup and Qvortrup 2017). This mostly stems from the fact that ‘inclusion’ is difficult, if not impossible, to define (Ainscow, Booth, and Dyson 2006; Ainscow and Sandhill 2010; Mitchell 2005; Allan 2015). The confusion around the concept oftentimes leads to inclusion political agendas promising too much (Armstrong et al. 2011; Haug 2016), which leaves practitioners struggling to create the necessary conditions to ensure all students are, indeed, included. The challenge of defining inclusive education is further complicated by uncertainty around who the inclusion movement is meant to address. While some advocate specifically on behalf of students with ‘disabilities’, others take a more holistic view of inclusion to include all those who have been historically marginalised from participating in education systems (Ainscow and Sandhill 2010; Mitchell 2005).

This is happening, however, in parallel to the ever-expanding ‘global testing culture’ (Smith 2016) that not only promotes, but *makes possible*, the categorisation of students and the incentives for schools to optimize their performance on various large-scale tests (e.g., PISA, TIMMS). The intersection of these two agendas (i.e., inclusion and testing) creates tension as diversity is encouraged through inclusive ideals on the one hand, but, on the other hand, the optimization of students is also encouraged by narrowly focusing on academic performance and testing (Allan and Artiles 2017; Hamre et al. 2018; Holloway and Hamre 2018). The dilemmas produced by these competing agendas are both logistically and philosophically problematic. As argued by Robinson (2009), there are now more ‘available syndromes’, which only works to emphasize the differences amongst students. At the same time, schools are pressured to be competitive and increase their performance status on national and international tests. This creates what Armstrong and colleagues (2011) consider ‘tensions between an education system consistent with the goal of full inclusion and a deficit approach to education provision’ (34). As more testing occurs, so too does the identification of difference, as well as the attempt to normalise these students to fit *into* the so-called ‘mainstream’ classroom. This shifts the conversation from one about building more inclusive

educational spaces, to one about how we force students to fit an ‘ideal type’ (Slee 2013). In doing so, the inclusion narrative is framed by vows to mitigate ‘educational failure’ (Armstrong et al. 2011 34), thus ultimately undermining the inclusive education agenda. As schools target their resources towards identifying and ‘fixing’ students to improve performance scores, they undermine efforts to create schools that embrace and *work with* difference. ‘The cumulative impact of this is that more children will be caught in the diagnostic net and the call will be for more resources to apply to their individual education programmes’ (Slee 2013, 905). This is becoming particularly prevalent in the education of future teachers (Hedegaard-Sørensen and Hamre 2018).

Accepting that schools have historically been sites of exclusion, and that the ‘testing culture’ is exacerbating this problem, is paramount to re-thinking what inclusive education might look like. Prominent inclusive education theorists, therefore, have implored us to ponder these fundamental questions about inclusion and to challenge the measurement and optimization discourses linked to inclusion. Nearly two decades ago, Slee and Weiner (2001) asked us to consider the following:

Knowing that schools are the site of systematic exclusion, the interrogation of the aims and form of schooling becomes one of the most pressing research agenda items. Inclusive schooling? Effective schooling? Our question remains on the table, school effectiveness for whom? (94-95).

As these questions remain relevant today, we use this article to ask whether the Danish political message of inclusion is congruent with the practices that are promoted through the policies that define its course. In the following section, we describe the Danish inclusion context, which will help us to understand how borders and limits of inclusion are constituted today.

### **Danish Context**

Denmark and the other Nordic countries have, since the interwar period (1930s), served as the ideal version of the welfare state's organization of universal rights for the individual (Hamre 2018). However, this idea of the universal welfare state's ability to solve social problems in relation to global market mechanisms has been problematic. Especially in the 1960s, Denmark's Social-Democratic led government promoted equality-oriented school policies, the purpose of which was to contribute to greater equality in society. The school was perceived as a welfare institution capable of compensating for social inequality and as a place that is capable of mitigating inequities associated with students' different social backgrounds.

This function of the school is exemplified by the ‘the comprehensive school’, or the undivided school, which was introduced in the 1970s. Previously, the school divided students into two tracks in accordance with their ‘abilities’. In line with the political agendas of the Social democratic party it was argued that the school was a possible site for disrupting social heritage. Even in a Scandinavian welfare state like Denmark that emphasizes the reduction of structural barriers and social equality as one of its major concerns (Højholt and Schwartz 2018), children are still excluded and privileged by the continuous reproduction of cultural conditions, social heritage and processes of power (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000; Bøje 2018; 6; Gilliam 2014; Hansen 2018). Like all schooling systems, certain cultural, historical and social norms influence how children experience Danish schools. Success in the school depends on the ability to adapt to cultural, behavioral and professional expectations, which varies amongst all children. The risk of being positioned as a ‘less competent’ student is linked to the positional goods (Karlson and Jæger 2011) or capitals (Bourdieu 1986; Esmark 2006) - each individual embodies. Even though exclusion and educational vulnerability is often associated with individuals from less privileged backgrounds, especially in terms of being able to navigate the challenging demands of the school system (Højholt and Kousholt 2018), it is particularly interesting that half of the Danish youths who find themselves in a marginalized position today do not originate from families with any of the risk factors in relation to social vulnerability (Benjaminsen et al. 2015). This indicates that it is insufficient *only* to scrutinize the individual goods or capitals if we are to pin point where and how exclusion and marginalization processes work today. In a society emphasizing education as the foremost important way to strengthen the national competitiveness (Pedersen 2011), it is paradoxical that the educational system could also be one of the main places for reproduction of capitals and thus where marginalization is determined. Whether privileged or not in terms of social heritage, marginalization has become a risk for all.

To address problems with such inequities and exclusion, in 1994, Denmark—along with a number of other countries—ratified the Salamanca Declaration's inclusive principles. This ratification complied with the existing universal principles of the Nordic welfare state, such as those related to democracy, ethics, and rights for everyone to be part of the community. As calls increased for ending segregating practices that had influenced the school system since the interwar period in Denmark, inclusion gained approval as the solution to a number of social and educational problems. This led to a number of municipalities implementing inclusion policies, but it was not until 2012 that a series of school laws were adopted, explicitly referring to inclusion (Folketinget 2012).

Among these were the objective to raise the overall percentage of children in the public schools from 94.4% to 96% during the year of 2015 (Regeringen and KL 2013). In the following years, these regulations caused a transfer of children from specialised education institutions to the Danish elementary schools, which resulted in a decreased number of segregated education institutions and an increased number of pupils in the Danish public schools (Danish Ministry of Education, 2016). Despite these efforts - which made inclusion successful in a structural way - the inclusion task was determined as the most important challenge in the public education system (Danmarks Evalueringsinstitut 2013; Ratner 2013). Furthermore, the national inclusion evaluation report highlighted 11 major barriers to be assuaged before inclusion could be deemed successful (Danish Ministry of Education 2016).

In parallel with this development towards inclusion, the Danish school was also undergoing a shift towards increased testing (Holloway and Hamre 2018). After receiving relatively poor results on the PISA assessment, an international critique led to a change of Danish school culture in the 2000s. As a result, national tests were adopted in the Danish parliament in 2006, and a culture of evaluation was introduced in the school system. In his book *Konkurrencestaten* [The Competition State], Professor Ove Kaj Petersen argued that the school had become a new field of national competitiveness in which each student should be optimized (Petersen 2012). The title of the book addressed a break with the image of the welfare state, calling for new solutions that addressed international and global challenges of the market. This shift in focus ran counter to goals of inclusion, creating significant challenges for upholding the fundamental principles of the inclusive project.

In this article, we take the view that the incompatibility of the evaluation culture and conceptions of inclusion in the educational system not only challenge, but downright undermine and blur the task of inclusion (Dyson and Gallannaugh 2008; Holloway and Hamre 2018; Tetler 2015). Thus, the main concern in this article is the political conceptions, which – simultaneously – expect the schools to level academic performance *and* generate a more inclusive learning environment. In particular, we argue that the emphasized challenges and barriers of inclusion call for a closer analysis of the political interpretations of inclusion. By doing so, we want to shed light on the structural tensions of inclusion between political objectives and pedagogical practices. By highlighting these rationales, we are approaching a research field that has already pointed at the contradictions and challenges associated with inclusion (Holloway and Hamre 2018; Kristensen 2012; Larsen 2015; Larsen and Hamre 2016; Nilholm 2010; Ratner 2013; Tetler 2008). Our aim is to extend the findings of these studies, as we believe that a deeper understanding of the conflicting rationales can clarify and

qualify the future debate on inclusion and the practice of inclusion in the Danish education system.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Drawing on the analytical insights of the reproductive function of the school (Bourdieu and Passeron 2009), as well as the understanding of the excluding mechanisms of the school system (Slee 2013), this article turns to an analysis of different rationalities in the Danish school system, drawing the theoretical framework of Michel Foucault (Foucault 2009). According to Foucault (1977, 1980, 1991b, 2009), a *dispositive* is an assemblage of the power and governance mechanisms that function as strategic components of societal arrangement. It is a

...heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of apparatus [*dispositif*]. The apparatus itself is a system of relations that can be established between these elements (Foucault 1980, 194).

By using a *dispositive* framework, we are encouraged to detect regularities and normalities in the social interaction between individual subjects and the political governance that aims to discipline them (Raffnsøe et al. 2016). Thus, in this article we will use the *dispositive* perspective to accentuate the social technologies that the political inclusion initiatives encompass, which enables us to understand the political inclusion laws and objectives as strategic governance aimed at producing the desired kinds of subjects through ‘... *silenced forms of power*’ (Moos, Krejsler and Kofod 2009, 75). In this way, we regard the strength of the *dispositive* analysis as its capacity to capture deeper social arrangements in a phenomenon aiming to produce a specific behaviour in specific ways at a specific point of time (Jensen 2002). As such, we are more concerned about the strategic rationales of the political inclusion initiatives, rather than inclusion as an independent and simply ideological phenomenon.

In Foucault’s analyses, three main *dispositive* types are present – the *law dispositive*, the *discipline dispositive* and the *security dispositive* (Foucault 2009; Raffnsøe et al. 2016). In this article, we analyse the political inclusion initiatives through two of these perspectives—namely the *discipline* *dispositive* and the *security* *dispositive*. Instead of using the *law* *dispositive*—or how the political inclusion discourse functions as a dividing line between the



permitted and the forbidden—we have used the *optimisation dispositive*. The optimization dispositive allows us to consider how individuals are influenced by economic and academic optimization rationales in modern societies (Hamre et al. 2015). This is particularly appropriate given that a main focus of the analysis is on the intersection of the ‘inclusion’ and ‘evaluation’ discourses that currently constitute Danish (and global) education policies and practices.

Uses these three analytical tools, we will illustrate how the political inclusion initiatives can be understood as a matter of disciplining-, security measuring- and optimizing-arrangements in the Danish society. It should be noted that various dispositives can be present at the same time and even be contingent upon each other (Foucault 2009). In this way, we consider our use of different dispositive types as a suitable strategy to capture the complexity that we believe the political inclusion initiatives in Denmark encompass. In the following section, we will present the selected dispositive lenses and the analytical possibilities they provide.

**Discipline dispositive.** The analytical focus of the discipline dispositive is related to the degree to which a discourse (e.g., a policy, norm, etc.) constructs a the discursive border between what is considered *normal* and *deviant* in society. As such, the discipline dispositive enables us to identify the political inclusion initiatives as strategic attempts to distinguish between desirable and non-desirable behaviour. Thus, we can view these processes as operating to govern (or steer) the conduct of individuals by a certain set of norms and intentions (Foucault 2009). Since the discipline dispositive operates in preventive and prescriptive manners, social interactions should be understood in relation to what is seen as desirable in a particular time and place (Raffnsøe et al. 2016)).

**Security dispositive.** The security dispositive frames ‘risk’ and ‘security’ not as natural occurrences, but as products of a liberal governmentality constructed for controlling populations. As argued by Wichum (2013), ‘the security of the population is the constitutive counterpart to its freedom—although liberalism defines freedom not as much as an imperative than as “the management and organization of the conditions in which one *can be free*” (Foucault, 2009)’ (p. 165). The technologies of security operate to intervene with events and/or populations that are deemed ‘threatening’ and/or ‘problematic’ for the society. Thus, the security dispositive is characterised by a curative function, which aims at cancelling unforeseen social problems in the future (Ibid). According to Foucault, this can be exemplified by state security processes, where the population often is object and subject of the security technologies (Foucault 2009). If we relate the functions of the security

dispositive to the aim of this article, it enables us to see how the political strive for inclusion also seems to provide a ‘solution’ to what has been determined as ‘threatening’ at the societal level.

**Optimisation dispositive.** The optimisation dispositive allows us to observe the economic rationales that increasingly influence both national and transnational education systems. Therefore, we see the optimisation dispositive as embedded in an overall global competitive field (Hamre 2012). With the optimisation dispositive, we can scrutinise how individuals are governed on the basis of their individual potentials as education subjects (Hamre et al. 2015). This may be apparent in initiatives that aim to include previously excluded individuals. In this case, we will argue that such initiatives may encompass a number of repositioning mechanisms, which seek both to re-include and re-define previously excluded children as potentials for further academic and social development (Ibid).

Based on these three dispositive types, it is our ambition to map how the rationales that shape the Danish political inclusion agenda can unpick the congruencies and incongruencies between inclusion as an ideal and inclusion as practice. In this way, the three dispositive types will enable us to emphasise the complexities that arise when divergent interests seek to legitimise themselves through the same phenomenon.

### **The construction of a political inclusion discourse**

In this section, we present how the analytical object of the article was constructed. Our methodological approach is based on document analysis and our analytical tools originate from Foucault’s notions of discourse analysis. This section will start with a presentation of the policy document that our analysis was based upon. Our chosen document, the Government and the association of Municipalities (Regeringen and KL 2013), is a part of the annual economic agreements between the Danish government and the local government Denmark—where some of the major political concerns and challenges in the Danish welfare state are presented. These political considerations set the course for the local economic latitudes in the Danish municipalities in the following year. Besides addressing topics like unemployment, green transition, economic growth and public health care, the document also reveals how problems in the Danish education system should be managed. The first political inclusion objectives were formulated in 2013, which included:

- The government aims to increase the proportion of students included in general education from 94.4% to 96% of the total students in elementary school.

- The proportion of students who are rewarded with grade 2 or less in reading, spelling and mathematical problem solving in their final school leaving examination must be reduced by 2015 and further reduced by 2018.
- The students maintain their wellbeing during the development of a more inclusive public school system (Regeringen og KL 2013).

These objectives have been regarded as milestones for the inclusion task in Denmark and have maintained a central position in the evaluation reports of the inclusion efforts at the municipality and governmental levels (Baviskar et al. 2013; Baviskar, Dyssegaard, Egelund, Lausten and Lynggaard 2014; Baviskar, Dyssegaard, Egelund and De Montgomery 2015; (Nielsen and Schindler 2016). Furthermore, the Danish Ministry of Education stated that the above-mentioned objectives were the main cause behind the flow of students from external education institutions towards the public schools in the following years (Danish Ministry of Education 2016).

Given the profound influence that these economic agreements between the Danish government and the local government had on the conception of inclusion in Denmark, this document provides a compelling means for mapping the rationales that played a pivotal role in the construction of a political inclusion strategy in Denmark. To this end, we treated the document not only as an artefact of the Danish inclusion history, but also as a discourse that constructs ‘inclusion’ as a political ideal and technology of governance. First, we identify discourses in the space “...between what one could say correctly at one period (under the rules of grammar and logic) and what is actually said. The discursive field is, at a specific moment, the law of this difference” (Foucault 1991, 63). In other words, when we consider the policy document as a discourse, we are able to analyse a concrete and limited number of statements that can reveal something about patterns in and limits to what is possible to say at a certain time within a particular field (Howarth 2000; Nexø and Koch 2011;).

. Furthermore, since our theoretical perspective also allows us to analyse the role of inclusion at a societal level, we have had an additional interest in how a number of national and global challenges are articulated in the document (e.g., the global testing culture). By analysing the ‘regularities’ and ‘norms’ that have been discursively constructed in the document, we were able to question how processes of power and knowledge construction influenced the inclusion agenda at that period (Andersen 1999; Foucault 1977; 2009;

Hacking 1986; Howarth 2000). In the following section, we present our analysis of the policy document using the three dispositive lens.

### **The disciplining mechanisms of the political inclusion discourse**

As previously mentioned, this analysis aims to illustrate the political inclusion initiatives as strategic attempts to assign disciplining labels—or ‘desirable’ versus ‘non-desirable’ categories—to the targeted individuals.

In the first sentence of the document, it is made clear that “The Danish economy faces major challenges in the coming years. Competitiveness is weak and productivity growth is low” (Regeringen and KL 2013, 1). Therefore, a reform agenda is presented, which aims to “... address these challenges and ensure economic growth and balance by the year of 2020” (Ibid, 1). At the institutional level, the document emphasizes that the Danish school system must provide more and better education to the students, which will be supported by a better and simpler resource management in the public school sector (Ibid). In this context, it is important to notice that the political interest in the Danish public schools is articulated at the same time as a number of economic concerns are also proclaimed at the national level. As a part of this optimization, the Danish Government and the Local Government Denmark agree to “... support a more inclusive primary school so that all pupils are guaranteed a high academic benefit” (Regeringen and KL 2013, 13).

According to Foucault, disciplining mechanisms are characterized by their attempt to influence a specific segment in a specific field (Foucault 2009), which – in this case – would be the children in the external and public Danish school system. In line with this, we find it interesting that the political will to create a more inclusive school system is articulated just shortly after they discovered that the annual expenditure on special and external education was equivalent to almost 30% of the total budget of the Danish public school system (Regeringen and Kommunernes Landsforening 2010). Relating this to the stated challenges regarding economic growth and balance in Denmark at this period, we argue that the political will to support a more inclusive public school system could be understood as a form of discipline aimed at producing a larger number of subjects, who – *in theory* - are able to contribute to the welfare of the state through taxes and their presence inside – *instead of* – outside of the society. Thus, inclusion and hereby the ‘guarantee of a high academic benefit’ would by no means be understood as more desirable than keeping the children at their external educational institutions. Thus, in line with the discipline dispositive, we identify a political will to create a more inclusive school system that seeks to influence the border

between what is perceived as ‘desirable’ and what is perceived as ‘non-desirable’ in the society. This ‘urge to normalise’ can also be related to some of the broader discourses that characterize modern societies today (Hamre et. al 2015).

Another distinctive feature of the discipline dispositive is that it operates in the sphere between knowledge and managerial interventions that seek to transform knowledge into political action (Foucault 2009). With this in mind, we find it noteworthy that the desire to create a more inclusive education system - and simultaneously raise the academic standards - is launched in a period where the latest PISA-results had left the Danish educational sector in a so-called PISA shock (OECD Directorate for Education 2012). According to the preventive mechanisms of the discipline dispositive, we argue that the political inclusion discourse encompasses disciplinary rationales, which also seek to neutralize unwanted occurrences in the future. We find this especially interesting because Denmark, at the same time, was accentuated as one of only three other countries where the PISA results have had an ‘extremely’ big impact on the educational policies and practices (Ibid).

### **The political inclusion discourse as a societal security mechanism**

In this section, we will present how the political inclusion initiatives can be understood as security mechanisms, which seek to minimize certain risk factors at the societal level. In other words, it is our aim to show inclusion as an arrangement that —as a response to what is considered as ‘undesirable’—seeks to neutralize problems prior to their occurrence.

At the societal level, the document presents a number of statements regarding the employment area, such as: “The municipalities have an important task in ensuring that unemployed people return to employment or begin an education program” (Regeringen and KL 2013, 11). The inclusion of unemployed individuals in the labour market should be done by a “... simplification of the rules in the unemployment area, which supports the unemployed in taking ownership of their job situation...” (Ibid, 11). In the case of the education sector, it is emphasized that the Danish public schools “...are the foundation of the Danish education system. Nevertheless, too many today leave primary school without sufficient skills to complete a youth education” (Regeringen and KL 2013, 13). Furthermore, it is emphasized that the use of specialized education for children in out-of-home care should be minimized and that more of these children should be included in the Danish public schools. The responsibility is placed on the schools to ensure that the specialized educational

facilities are capable of preparing the children to complete further education. (Regeringen and KL 2013)

If we analyze these statements in relation to the previously mentioned economic concerns in terms of international competitive stance and productivity growth, then a key feature of the inclusion discourse could be understood as the labeling of excluded individuals as ‘risk factors’ in the greater society. In this way, the inclusion discourse could exemplify how prevailing trends are related to the creation of certain risk groups by defining them as vulnerable or in need of treatment (Mik-Meyer and Villadsen 2007). It should also be noted that the unemployed individuals apparently are encouraged to *treat themselves* by taking ownership of their job situation.

In line with the security dispositive perspective, we argue that the political inclusion discourse encompasses strategic mechanisms that target perceived ‘threatening’ and/or ‘problematic’ subjects. In this way, the functions of the security dispositive relate to the conduct and performability of certain groups of individuals (Foucault 2008; Hamre et al. 2015). From this perspective, the rationales that support a more inclusive society and school system can be understood as a response to the societal challenges at this particular period of time. Thus, we argue that the political inclusion interventions operate as a societal security system—which seeks to address the risk that excluded individuals in modern society represent—and, thereby, neutralize unwanted future problems for the Danish society.

### **The political inclusion discourse in an optimization perspective**

In the previous section, we suggested that the political inclusion initiatives encompass a number of mechanisms that seek to address societal ‘risk factors’. In this section, we will further elaborate these rationales by involving the optimization dispositive, which enables us to highlight some of the rationales associated with individual and societal optimization in the inclusion discourse.

As a starting point, we find it noteworthy that the Danish inclusion objectives encompass a specific goal (i.e., 96%) of children to be included in the public schools, as well as an ambition to raise the overall academic standards, but doing so while simultaneously supporting the students’ social wellbeing. This coherence between inclusion and academic outcomes relates to the earlier mentioned agreement to support an inclusive public school system to ensure the academic development amongst all children. This indicates that overall academic optimization is framed as something that can be achieved *at the same time* as including an increased number of children in the Danish public schools.

If we examine these notions of inclusion through an optimization dispositive lens, we can argue that the inclusion discourse can be understood as an intervention that seeks to meet and manage the children's potentials as professional training subjects (Hamre et al. 2015). This is especially interesting in relation to the concerns about economy and national competitiveness, which was highlighted in the preamble of the document. When inclusion is presented as a partial solution to some of the national challenges, we can see how the political inclusion discourse is framed by the broader political focus that aims to promote the competitiveness of the state, as opposed to caring about the welfare of individuals (Pedersen 2011). This aligns with Denmark's transition from a welfare state to a competition state, which causes an increased political interest in designing an educational sector that delivers competitive results and educates students to their future participation in the labor market (Ibid. 188).

This signals towards how the policy-based inclusion discourse seeks to fulfill professional potentials of the pupils "... already understood as skilled, but also of the pupils who previously were understood as less skilled ..." (Hamre et al. 2015, 40). In other words, the inclusion initiatives seem to encompass technologies that aim to reposition previously excluded subjects as learning, social and reflective citizens (Hamre 2012). Inclusive politics can thus 'sanitize' problematic behavior in order to make it more acceptable for the political objectives of future generations. The political understanding of inclusion as something that goes hand in hand with academic optimization also urges us to focus on the relationship between management and excluded individuals' self-management, which is one of the central functions of the optimization dispositive (Foucault 1988). In this way, the inclusion discourse is framed by a management logic that requires a basic willingness and commitment amongst the included individuals to develop (or self-optimize) themselves (Hamre et al. 2015), which is also exemplified by the political interest associated with the unemployed individuals. In other words, it seems that the inclusion initiatives invite included individuals to processes that "... on one side are about optimizing knowledge and personal skills and - on the other side – about a willingness to see themselves as lifelong learners and never fully developed" (Ibid, 30). This exemplifies how the political inclusion discourse operates through the use of social contracts, which seek to influence the individual's relationship with themselves (Andersen 2003). In this context, the contract seems to encompass mechanisms that empower previously excluded individuals to change their position from that of excluded to included. Or as Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen puts it: "The management wants the citizens to want something with themselves" (Ibid, 96).

## Conclusion

This article has highlighted some of the educational paradoxes associated with inclusion in the Scandinavian welfare state of Denmark. The aim of breaking negative social heritage through educational efforts reflect Scandinavian Social democratic welfare policy in the postwar period. The analysis of the policy document has highlighted the problems in these political intentions, illustrating how present educational policy is influenced by rationalities of security of the state, as well as the optimization of the skills and competences of the individual. In this light, the school system as whole, and specifically the politics of inclusion, appear ambivalent in the management of diversity (Hamre 2018). These ambivalences highlight the change in focus from universal rights to optimization and accountability, and, at the state level, between the welfare state and the competition state (Pedersen 2012; Hansen and Bjørnsrud 2018).

As a political project, inclusion was founded on contradictory interests and intentions, which has led to both theoretical and practical dilemmas. While this article has focused primarily on the theoretical dimension of inclusions, we should also point out how these conditions make it possible for practical incongruencies to emerge. To name just a few: it is problematic when local politicians focus too much on some of the economic rationales related to inclusion (e.g., chasing the economic benefits in shutting down external specialized institutions and transferring the children back to the public schools). Likewise, it is problematic when local school managers focus too much on some of the optimizing rationales related to inclusion (e.g., expecting a continuing rise in the average grades at the same time as including a higher number of children in the system). Finally, it is problematic when educators use increasingly limited frameworks for measuring pupils' competences and determining what it means to be a 'successful student'. Even though this analysis has underlined disparate rationalities at the policy level, these cases signal a need for actors at all levels of the school system to commit to more holistic conceptualizations of inclusion. One need only look to contexts where the inclusion discourse has been almost entirely co-opted by market-oriented, or neoliberal, agendas to see the dangers associated with conflating accountability, inclusion and optimization (Valle et al., 2011).

As such, researchers, politicians and professionals need to take into consideration that special education, as well inclusion, is influenced by historical dispositives that discursively construct certain forms of behavior as problematic or risky (Hamre 2018). The conceptualization of risky behavior varies according to the present dominating agendas at a national as well as a global level. This calls for a research agenda analyzing these



rationalities, and the construction of subjectivities enforced by them, at multiple sites of research: (i) at a structural level questioning the function of reproduction and social mobility in society, (ii) an ongoing analysis of conflicting educational agendas and how these affect the schooling system, and (iii) a critique of how the structural barriers and the opposing agendas impact teachers, principals, students and school/classroom practices. Educational policy need to take research in inclusive theory and practice seriously in the making of legislation and policies for schooling. Fisker (2017) argues for example that, instead of unilaterally focusing on the curriculum, we should first establish that (i) all children deserve a legitimate position in the classroom, (ii) children enter school from different starting points, and (iii) some of these starting points differ to a degree where specific pedagogical interventions are required.

Taking all the theoretical, pedagogical and political intentions of creating an inclusive education system into account, more attention needs to be paid towards the critique of the Danish welfare state for being dominated by competition and economic rationales (Kristensen 2014), resulting in a loss of autonomy and meaning amongst those welfare workers who work with marginalized individuals on a daily basis (Hansen 2017). This call for a reflection of the historical idea of the Scandinavian welfare state itself as the way to solve social exclusion. By highlighting the rationales and the obvious divergences among them, the aim of this article is to underscore the importance of the above addressed call for a research agenda encompassing different approaches to the ambitions of making inclusive education possible.

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